

CLAIMS

22. A unitary portable data storage device which can be directly plugged into a universal serial bus (USB) socket of a computer and which is operative to function as an alternative to a magnetic disk or compact disk (CD), and which is capable of storing software for installation to the computer or of receiving and storing user's data present in the computer, the unitary portable data storage device comprising:

a USB plug integrated into the unitary portable data storage device without an intervening cable capable of coupling the unitary portable data storage device directly to a USB socket on a computer;

a single interface, said interface allowing the unitary portable data storage device to communicate via the USB protocol and being coupled to the USB plug;

a non-volatile solid-state memory, said memory being non-removable from the unitary portable data storage device and having sufficient capacity to enable the unitary portable data storage device to serve as an alternative to a magnetic disk or CD; and

a memory controller, the memory controller being coupled between the interface and the memory to control the flow of data between the memory and the USB plug in a manner to enable the unitary portable data storage device to serve as an alternative to a magnetic disk or CD.

23. A unitary portable data storage device according to claim 22, wherein the memory controller is non-removable from the unitary portable data storage device.

24. A unitary portable data storage device according to claim 22, wherein the non-volatile solid-state memory is a flash memory.

25. A unitary portable data storage device according to claim 22, further comprising a manually operated switch movable between a first position in which writing of data to the memory is enabled, and a second position in which writing of data to the memory is prevented.

26. A unitary portable data storage device according to claim 22, wherein the memory controller comprises a micro-controller.

27. A unitary portable data storage device according to claim 26, wherein the micro-controller includes a read-only memory which stores a program to control the operation of the micro-controller.

28. A unitary portable data storage device according to claim 22, wherein the unitary portable data storage device is sufficiently compact to maximize portability.

29. A unitary portable data storage device according to claim 22, wherein the non-volatile solid-state memory is divided into a plurality of zones.

30. A unitary portable data storage device according to claim 29, wherein one or more of said plurality of zones require a unique password for access.